

A GENERAL HISTORY OF  
CHRISTIAN COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

BY  
O. E. YOUNG.

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THESIS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF LETTERS IN THE  
COLLEGE OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE.

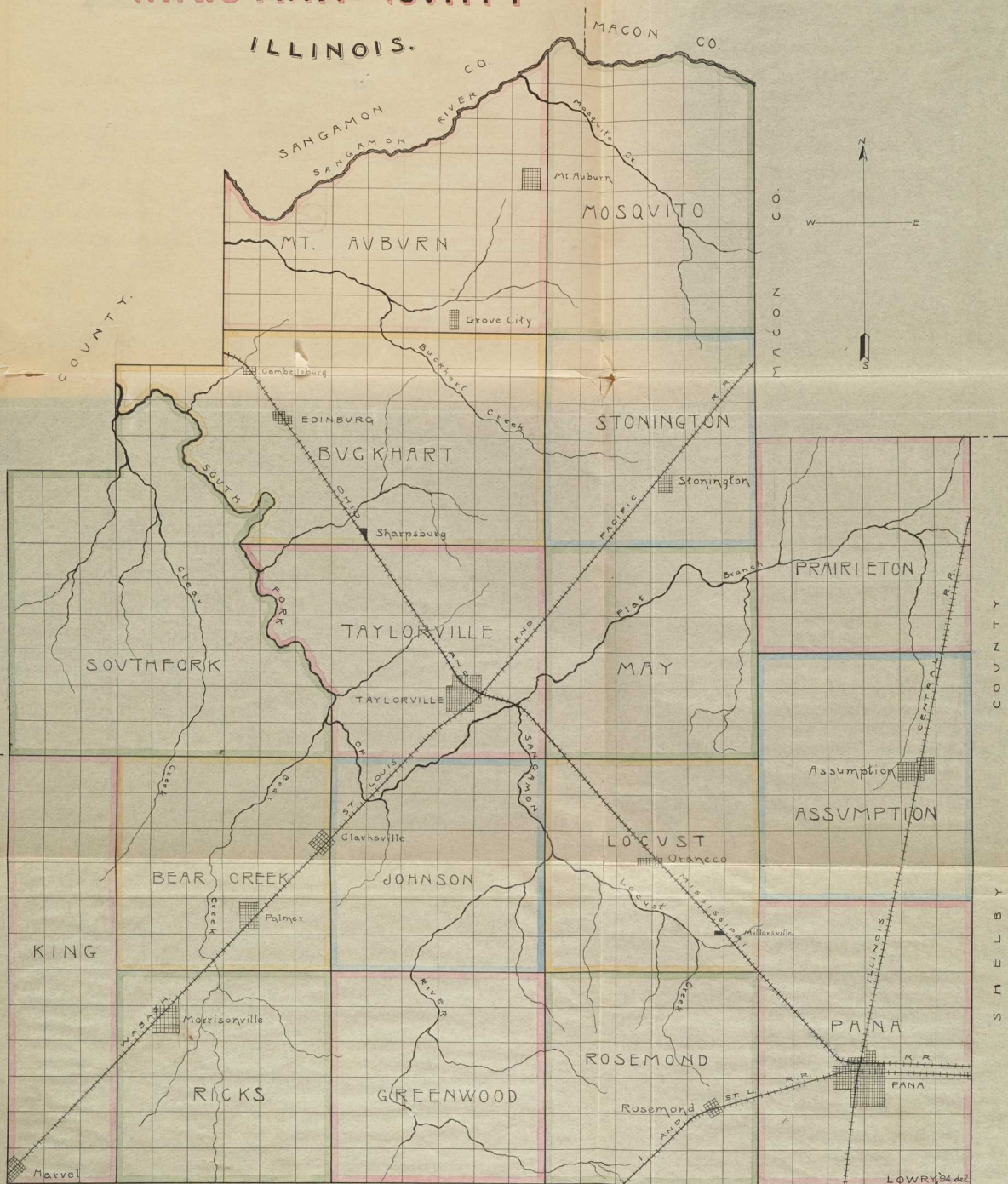
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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS.

1893.

OUTLINE MAP  
OF  
CHRISTIAN COUNTY

ILLINOIS.



MONTGOMERY

COVNTY.

SHELBY CO.



# A General History of Christian County Illinois.

## Introduction.

In assuming the roll of historian, one finds himself confronted by almost insurmountable difficulties. It is true, every locality possesses a greater or less amount of material in the form of traditions, stories of valorous deeds, letters and public documents, all bearing more or less upon its history. But this material is often difficult to gain possession of and when it has been obtained, the task of arranging the various fragments into suitable form for presentation, is not a small one. But despite the numerous obstacles which

the historian is obliged to encounter and to overcome, his mission is an important one. For all history, if properly written, is interesting and useful. Indeed, there is not a country, or city, or hamlet whose history might not be more or less valuable to posterity.

This work is, no doubt, incomplete in many particulars. But it is impossible for it to be otherwise. However, I have endeavored to make it, so far as it goes, truthful and accurate. In a work of this kind it is difficult to decide which of the less important details are worthy of insertion and which shall be excluded. I am greatly indebted to the present officers of the county for their kindness in allowing me the liberty of examining the records, from which the data, which constitute the foundation of this work, were taken.

The Author,



## Chapter I.

### Early History of the State.

In writing this historical sketch of one of the most beautiful counties in the West, I do not deem it necessary or advisable to dwell, at any great length, upon the history of the state in which it lies. The story of the discovery of the valley of the Mississippi by the French under LaSalle and Marquette, is read by every school-boy. The record of this vast region while under British control and its subsequent formation as a County of Virginia, forms a part of the early history of the country. It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the organization of the great Northwest Territory by the celebrated ordinance of 1787. Space will not permit an enumeration of the many

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changes undergone by this vast domain, as one state after another was taken from it. In 1809, after the states of Ohio and Indiana had been carved out, the territory of Illinois was constituted. The seat of government was located at Kaskaskia. Nine years later, a bill providing for the admission of a portion of the Territory of Illinois (corresponding to the present area of the state) into the Union as a sovereign state, was passed by Congress. A short time after this a convention assembled at Kaskaskia for the purpose of framing a Constitution. In the latter part of that year an election was held under the newly-framed Constitution and Shadrach Bond was elected Governor. Illinois was then declared a member of the Union and on equal footing, in all respects, with the original states. The city of Kaskas-



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kia was retained as the seat of government until 1820 when it was removed to Vandalia where it remained for twenty years. At the end of that time Springfield was selected as the capital of the state.

Such, in brief, is the history of the territorial government and of the organization of the "Prairie State", comprising, as it does, an area of 55 410 square miles of excellent land it has attained a high rank among its sister states both in wealth and in population. The state is divided up into one-hundred and two separate counties, all of which are thickly inhabited by industrious, prosperous and enlightened people. Near the centre of this grand commonwealth of counties, lies the one whose name appears on the title-page of this work.

## Chapter II.

### Aborigines and Pioneers.

The settlement of Christian county began the year that Illinois was admitted into the Union as a state. Prior to that time, the whole country had been occupied by different tribes of Indians, many of them hostile to the whites and often warring against each other. These, however, have all disappeared before the irresistible march of advancing civilization. Little is known of this unprogressive race. Their origin is a mystery; their history is a myth. They contributed nothing to the world's progress. A few simple relics found in many parts of the country are all we have by which to remember them. All? No not all by any means! We have their country. Their



hunting-grounds have long since been destroyed and turned to better use by their civilized brethren. The industrious tiller of the soil now treads upon the graves of their forefathers. We look around us and rightfully rejoice at these things. Nevertheless, we can not erase from our memory the disastrous fate of the red man. The method by which he was deprived of his possessions, his happiness, and even his life, will ever remain a blot upon the records of our country. Simple and untutored as he was, the abused and down-trodden savage is deserving of the pity and sympathy of all coming generations.

The central portion of this state was considered a very fine hunting region and was inhabited by the Black-Hawk and Kickapoo

tribes. Members of the Fox and Sac tribes also frequented this region in search of game. A fragment of the Kickapoo tribe still resided in Christian county when the first settlers appeared. This was in 1818. It is claimed that the honor of being the first white settler of the county now comprised within the limits of this county belongs to one, Martin Haron by name, a native of Tennessee. He, like those immediately following him, settled in the southern part of the county and built his cabin in the edge of the timber near a small stream. This would naturally be so. People going to a new and uninhabited country find it most convenient to take up their abodes where water fuel etc are most plentiful. Hence it was that, the settlers who came to the county ~~many~~



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many years later, found much of the rich prairie land still unoccupied.

The first settlers, however, did not depend entirely upon the productions of the soil for their subsistence. The hunting-grounds of the Indians were full of game of all kinds. Hunting and trapping was profitably carried on for several years. Another article that became a desirable commodity in trade and commerce was beeswax. The woods at this time were full of bee trees, and it was not uncommon for the settlers to take "bee-hunting" excursions. The bees seem to have preceded the settlers in their arrival. One writer says "The approach of the honey-bee was always a sad harbinger to the Indians, for they knew the pale-faces were not far behind." This source of profit was, however, quickly

exhausted, and as the game in the forest grew more and more scarce, the settlers were obliged to look to other means for support. Gradually the cultivation of the soil began which soon converted the level prairies and much of the timber land into productive fields. The cabins of the primitive inhabitants were replaced by substantial and spacious dwellings, cities and towns were built, and monuments of educational and religious zeal were erected, until now it is almost impossible for one to obtain an adequate idea of the trials and inconveniences that beset the hardy pioneer.

### Chapter III.

#### Geography and Resources.

Christian county lies between the 39<sup>th</sup> and



40<sup>th</sup> parallels of latitude. It constitutes a part of what has been termed "The Grand Prairie of Illinois" and is classed as one of the south central counties of the state. Its greatest length is from north to south being about thirty two and a half miles, and its breadth is about twenty seven miles from east to west. The county contains an area of 700 square miles or 451200 acres. It is bounded on the north by Sangamon and Macon counties, on the east by Macon and Shelby counties, on the south by Shelby and Montgomery counties, while Montgomery and Sangamon counties form its western boundary.

The name of the capital of the county is Taylorville. It is a city of about four thousand inhabitants, situated twenty miles southwest

of Decatur at the junction of the Wabash St Louis and Pacific, and the Springfield division of the Ohio and Mississippi railways. Besides the county seat, there are sixteen cities and towns scattered over the county.

In form the county is almost an oblong square, and is divided into seventeen municipal townships or voting precincts, namely, Pana, Princeton, Assumption, Rosemond, Locust, May, Stonington, Mosquito, Greenwood, Johnson, Taylorville, Buckhart, Mt Auburn, Ricks, Bear Creek, South Fork and King. The population of the county according to the census of 1890 numbers 30531 showing an increase of 8.16 per cent over the census of 1880. It is composed of English, German, Irish, French and Swede extraction, with a few colored persons.



The Sangamon river which forms part of the northern boundary, drains almost the entire county with its tributaries. The principal of these is the South Fork of the Sangamon, while Buckhart and Mosquito creeks are also quite large branches. Buckhart creek rises in the south-eastern part of Stonington township and flows in a north-westerly direction leaving the county in the north-western part of Mt Auburn township. Mosquito creek takes its rise in the county of Macon. It enters Christian in the south-eastern part of Mosquito township, flows northwest and cuts off a small corner of Mt Auburn township before reaching the Sangamon. However, the greatest area is drained by the South Fork and its branches of which the following are the most important, viz: Flat Branch, Bear

Creek, Clear creek, and Locust creek. The South Fork rises near the southern boundary of the county in Rosemond township whence it takes a north-westerly course passing through six different townships and separating the township of South Fork from those of Taylorville and Buckhart. It leaves the county in the western part of Buckhart township. All of the county south of the townships of Buckhart and Stonington is drained by this creek and its affluents. Besides the above described creeks and streams, excellent water is afforded by numerous springs.

The narrow belts of woodland which line the banks of the various streams, constitute the timber of the county. The early settlers destroyed the timber with a degree of recklessness, course-



quently much of the forest has disappeared, a large amount of it having been used for fuel and for fencing. This rapid consumption of the timber has been greatly reduced within the last few years by the discovery of coal in large quantities in various parts of the county. When the county was first settled trees of any kind were extremely scarce upon the prairies. Large orchards and artificial groves have, however, been grown for purposes of food and shade.

The surface of the land is divided between woodland and prairie. As a general thing the prairie land is level and in some parts extremely flat. However, some parts of Rosemond, Pana, Bear Creek, South Fork, Mt Auburn, Johnson and May townships are rather undulating. Adjacent

In the streams may be found numerous small hills and bluffs. A few mounds are also found within its borders, the largest being in Rosemond and Mt Auburn townships. Nearly all of the land is susceptible of cultivation and affords the widest application of machinery.

The prairie soil of the county ranges from one to four feet in thickness and is of the blackest and richest quality. It is said to have been formed from decomposed accumulations of grass and prairie weeds and is seemingly inexhaustible. In the northern part along the Sangamon it is somewhat sandy. In other portions yellow clay is found at the surface. The soil generally, is adapted to raising nearly all the cereals such as; wheat, corn, oats, rye etc. In the production of grain and live stock



the official reports show a wonderful growth in the last decade. Almost all kinds of fruit can be raised with success and profit. Those most grown are the apple, pear, plum, cherry and grape. Many smaller fruits and berries also thrive. Vegetables of all kinds grow to perfection.

The chief industry is agriculture and stock raising, and it employs a majority of the people of the county, who possess all the sterling virtues of the rural freeholder. As a general thing the farmers are independent, the majority of them owning the land which they cultivate. They appear prosperous and contented. One reason for this, I think, lies in the fact that the remainder of the population seems to recognize that directly upon the shoulders of the tiller of the soil rests the prosperity of every other class of men. He holds

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in his hands the destinies of all. His success means universal prosperity; his failure means universal distress.

As to facilities for transportation the county is well supplied. Four different lines of railroad traverse its territory, two of which pass diagonally through it. The Illinois Central and the Indianapolis and St Louis roads cut off small portions of the southeast corner of the county. The former was built in 1853-4, and the latter was completed a year later. At their junction is situated the metropolis of the county—Pana, which is now a city of about 6000 people. The principal railroad of the county is the Wabash St Louis and Pacific. It passed through in a north-easterly and south-westerly direction, the length of the line in the county being over thirty one



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miles. This road furnishes transportation facilities for the towns of Taylorville, Morrisouville, Stonington, Palmer, Clarksdale and Harvel. It was completed in 1870 and is considered one of the best roads in the West. The Springfield branch of the Ohio and Mississippi road runs diagonally through the county from the northwest to the southeast corner. It crosses the Wabash at Taylorville. Pana, Taylorville, and Edinburg are the principal stations along this route. The charter for the building of this road was obtained in 1865 but the work was not completed until 1870.

#### Chapter IV. Gloria of the County.

The intelligent tiller of the soil, in seeking a suitable location in a new country, gives special

attention to the native vegetation as an unfailing indication of the value and fertility of the soil. Upon examining the reports of various botanists who have made a study of the vegetation, it is surprising to see how great an effect civilization has produced upon the flora of the country. The early settler found the vast prairies covered with a variety of grasses, plants and flowers and the banks of the streams bearing a luxurious growth of timber. All or nearly all of these have suffered greatly at the hands of the farmer or of the woodsman. Many species of the vegetable kingdom have disappeared never to return. The well-known Buffalo grass and the large pampas grass have become extinct, and given way to blue-grass which is rapidly displacing some of the other grasses. Rare and useful plants abound. The pink-root, the columbo, the



ginseng, the boneset, pennyroyal and others are used as herbs for medicine. Plants of beauty are the phlox, the lily, the mint, golden rod and hundreds of others that adorn the meadows and brook-sides. Besides, there are climbing vines, the trumpet creeper, the wood-bine, the clematis and the grape, which fill the woods with gay festoons and add grace to many a decaying monarch of the forest. But the trees and grasses are of the most importance. The oak with at least its twenty varieties; the hickory with as many more species; the thirty kinds of elm and the tall and straight black walnut; the blackberry; the tulip; the large cotton-woods and hundreds of others attest the fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate, while the blue-grass, in its ten varieties, timothy and clover afford excellent pasturage for the use of stock-raiser.

## Chapter V The Fauna of the County.

In this chapter I shall not attempt to present a complete list of all the animals that have existed here prior to and since the advent of the white man. It is hoped that the naming of a few of the most important of these will suffice. Of the animals that were indigenous to this territory we had the American Elk, the well-known American deer and the White-tailed deer. And at a period not very remote the American Buffalo must have found pastures near the alluvial and shaded banks of the Sangamon and upon the prairies of this portion of the state. The heads, horns, and bones of these animals were still numerous in 1820. The Black Bear is still remembered by the



older settlers. The Gray Wolf and Prairie Wolf have not infrequently been found within the last ten or fifteen years, and the Gray Fox still exists in some parts of the county. The Panther was occasionally met with in the earlier times as was also the Wild Cat or Lynx. Several species of the Weasel existed here; The Mink; the American Otter; the Skunk; the Badger; Raccoon; and the Opossum. The squirrel family is represented by five different species. The Woodchuck and the Musk Rat. Bats and Moles are common. The native Meadow Mouse and the Long-tailed Jumping Mouse are still found. The Rabbit was originally very plentiful but is now fast disappearing. Fish are found quite abundantly in the Sangamon and in the smaller streams. The most common are the Cat, Bass and the Sunfish. Perch, Pike and Buffalo are

also occasionally caught. The woods and groves are inhabited by an almost endless variety of birds ranging from the tiny Wren to the larger Hawks and Owls, but space will not permit me to append this exceedingly long list.

## Chapter VII. Civil History.

Prior to the year 1839 that portion of Illinois now known as Christian county, was a part of Sangamon Montgomery and Shelby counties. It was originally named Lane but only retained the name for one year. It was in 1839 that the legislature in session at the capital at Vandalia, passed an act creating the county of Lane, and appointing Commissioners to select a seat of justice. The act was approved by Governor Carlin February 15,



1839. The Commissioners met May 20, 1839 to explore the county and locate the seat of justice. After due consideration, a spot near the centre of the county on section twenty seven of what is now Taylorville township was designated as the site of the future capital of the county.

The law provided that the location of the county seat should not be made on private property, unless the owner thereof convey to the county twenty acres of land, having the court-house square in the centre, or donate in lieu thereof \$3000. to be used in erecting public buildings. A company of Springfield gentlemen, composed of Mr Richard F. Barnett, Hon. John Taylor, Robert Allen, and Marvellous Eastham, had the ground surveyed and platted. The company agreed to pay the \$3000. required by law, and executed their obligations for

that amount. They, however, failed to pay the money at maturity. A suit was instituted, and the case eventually carried to the Supreme Court, but while pending in that court the matter was compromised, the company conveying to the county the public square and seventy eight town lots.

A short time after the seat of justice had been located, the settlers gave a magnificent dinner in honor of the members of the company. At the dinner some one proposed to name the new county seat, and that in so doing it should be in honor of one of the notable guests. In response to a toast it was named Taylorville in honor of Hon. John Taylor of Springfield.

The county was first named Lane in honor of Nathan Lane of Massachusetts, who while occupying a seat in Congress figured conspicuously



as the author of that celebrated ordinance by which the great Northwest Territory was forever consecrated to freedom. The changing of the name Wane to that of Christian was brought about in the following manner: It was rumored that Nathan Wane was a radical Federalist. The county at that time, as at present was democratic and the term "Federalist" was somewhat distasteful. Another thing that added coloring to this charge, was the fact that the name Wane had first been proposed by a prominent "whig" politician who took an active part in the formation of the county. As to how much influence these facts really had in bringing about the change, we can only conjecture. Suffice it to say they served as valuable instruments in the hands of the opposing party. The democratic leaders circulated

petitions asking that the name be changed. In aid of the movement a mass-meeting of the citizens was held on the open prairie where the court-house now stands; a motion was made and adopted that the name Christian be substituted for that of Lane. It is said that this name was suggested from the fact that many of the inhabitants had originally been citizens of Christian county Kentucky. The change was effected and legalized by an act of the legislature passed February 1, 1840. The records and proceedings of the county for the first year after its organization, appear under the name of Lane. But on the official records of the county court, of March 2, 1840 the change is thus noted "Christian (alias Lane) county".

Who first conceived the idea of the formation



of the county is not known. A number of the early settlers were prominent in the movement and it is doubtful whether the honor can be ascribed to any one man. Several different petitions were circulated and borne to the legislature. In granting the first petition the legislature passed an act by which it made the third principal meridian the eastern boundary of the newly formed county. This was unsatisfactory to the friends of the movement and a second petition was sent to the general assembly. A new act was passed granting to the county of Kane three and a half townships lying east of the third principal meridian and formerly belonging to the county of Shelby. These townships comprised an area of 80640 acres.

The first election for county officers was

held on the first Monday in April 1839. There were but three voting places, for the population of the county at that time numbered but 1400, and only 160 votes were cast at the election. A few months after this election, it was found for the proper transaction of official business, that some suitable building be erected for that purpose. Steps were immediately taken toward the erection of a court-house. The following year a building was erected in the centre of the public square at a cost of \$3000. This served the purpose until 1854 when the need of a larger and more substantial building became apparent. Accordingly, the contract for a new building was let and the present edifice is the result. It occupies the site of the old court-house and is said to have cost \$15000. It was not completed until December 1856.



## Chapter VII.

### Patriotism of its Sons.

Since the organization of this country, three wars have disturbed the peace of its inhabitants, and thrice has its strong men responded to the call of the government. The Black Hawk war marks the close of the long struggle between the native red man and his conqueror and successor. The Mexican war was fought by two distinct nations, while the third and greatest of all was waged between brethren of a common country. The Black Hawk war broke out in the spring of 1832. The assembling of the warriors on the east bank of the Mississippi alarmed the settlers, many of whom fled from their homes for safety. General Reynolds, who was then Governor of Illinois, called

out a large number of volunteers who were ordered to join the regular forces. Among those who enlisted from Christian county were a number of veterans of 1812. It was about the middle of May that the army had its first encounter with the enemy. The two forces met at Stillman's Run near Rock river; the Indians fought desperately and succeeded in routing the army. Governor Reynolds was obliged to order out two thousand additional volunteers. Several battles and skirmishes occurred during the summer, the most important of which was on the bank of the Mississippi. One hundred and fifty of the Black Hawk warriors were slain and many were drowned in attempting to swim the river. Black Hawk himself escaped but afterward surrendered. In September of the same year a permanent and lasting treaty was made and the Indians were assigned to lands



west of the Mississippi.

The county had no regular organization in the war with Mexico, but furnished a number of volunteers who enlisted with regiments from other parts of the state. A company was raised in this county and reported by its captain but it was rejected, as the regiments had all been organized. The volunteers who went out from this county did their duty gallantly and well. H. M. Vandever came back with the rank of captain. He was at the battle of Buena Vista on the staff of General Wool, and is said to have been the messenger who bore General Taylor's famous dispatch, "A little more grape Captain Bragg".

The heroes of the Mexican conflict had rested but twelve years from the hardships of war, when the booming of cannon was heard at Fort

Summer. The county had, during these twelve years, made great advancements in population and in the development of resources. Nevertheless, the call to arms found the loyal sons of Christian county ready to bid farewell to homes, friends, and bright prospects, and to go forth in defense of the grand principle of nationality.

It was at first thought that the spontaneous movement of the people would be sufficient to furnish the necessary quotas of soldiers. This was, however, soon found to be inadequate. Numerous methods for raising volunteers were devised and every effort was made to evade the draft, but it finally became necessary to resort to that unpopular and distasteful measure. The population of the county according to the census of 1860 was 10475. An enrollment made in 1863 showed the county to



contain 1532 men subject to military duty. The county's quota during the entire war reached the total of 1449. The whole number raised by volunteers and by draft was 1369, thus leaving a deficit of 80 at the close of the war. It was not until September 1864 that the first draft was ordered. Another was made in December of the same year. Immediately after this latter draft, the county court, in special session, ordered a tax of \$2.50 on every \$100 worth of taxable property in the county & be levied and directed that it be used for the relief of the drafted men. By these means, substitutes were procured for many deserving men who would have been greatly injured by being forced into the field.

Perhaps of all the organizations sent out from Christian county, Company H of the 14<sup>th</sup>

Infantry regiment did the most effective work. The company was formed at Taylorville in the early part of 1861 and joined the regiment at Jacksonville in May of that year. During the remainder of the year the regiment was with General Fremont in Missouri. Early in 1862, it was ordered to Fort Donaldson and a few months later met the enemy in the fearful conflict at Shiloh where it lost nearly half of its number. It took an active part in the sieges of Corinth, Vicksburg and Jackson Mississippi. It crossed the swamps of Louisiana and captured Fort Beauregard. Thence it was taken to Atlanta to aid General Sherman. Here it was united with the 15<sup>th</sup> Illinois regiment to form the Illinois Veteran Battalion. Late in 1864 the battalion was attacked by General Hood's army and almost



annihilated, Many of its members were sent to Andersonville prison, while those who escaped capture served as scouts on Sherman's grand march through Georgia. The 14<sup>th</sup> regiment was furnished new recruits in the spring of 1865, and remained in the field until the war was over. It accompanied Sherman's army to Washington and took part in the grand review. This regiment saw four years and four months of laborious service during which time it marched 5000 miles, traveled by rail 2400 miles and by river about 4500 miles, Company H remained with the regiment until it was mustered out of the service.

Company G. of the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry regiment was also from this county. Its captain, Francis M. Song of Taylorville, was killed at Jackson Mississippi. Captain Song was a brave man and is still

gratefully remembered by his soldiers. As a means of perpetuating his name, his comrades organized the F. M. Song Post of the G. A. R. which is still maintained. The 4<sup>th</sup> regiment did its greatest service in the Vicksburg campaign and was mustered out in August 1864. Besides the aboved mentioned organizations, there were many others that did valiant service. Company A. of the 115<sup>th</sup> regiment was engaged in many hard-fought battles among which were, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Chattanooga and Resaca. Company H. of the 130<sup>th</sup> Regiment took part in the Red river expedition as did also Company H. of the 124<sup>th</sup> Regiment. In cavalry the county was represented by several companies belonging the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Regiments. These regiments were employed mainly in the southwest and were



under the command of that dashing leader, General Curtis who so ably assisted General Sherman in his disastrous attack upon Vicksburg.

## Chapter VIII.

### The County's Bench and Bar.

By an act of the legislature, February 21, 1845 the counties of Sangamon, Tazewell, Woodford, Champaign, McLean, Livingston, De Witt, Piatt, Vermilion, Edgar, Moultrie, Christian, Menard and Logan were organized & form the eighth judicial district of the state. Judge Samuel H. Great presided over this district until transferred to the Federal courts by President Polk, when David Davis of Bloomington became his successor. Judge Davis afterward achieved national fame

as a jurist and as a statesman.

In February 1853 the state was redistricted, Christian county being placed in the 17<sup>th</sup> judicial district along with Bond, Fayette, Shelby, Montgomery, Effingham, Macon, Moultrie and Piatt counties. Four years later the circuit was again changed. The 18<sup>th</sup> judicial district was formed comprising the courts of Sangamon, Montgomery, Macoupin and Christian. Hon. E. J. Rice of Hillsboro was elected judge of the new circuit which office he held until 1870 when he resigned to take his seat in Congress. Hon. H. M. Vandever, one of the early pioneers, succeeded him. At the expiration of his term in 1879, General Jesse J. Phillips of Hillsboro was chosen his successor. In 1877 the legislature passed a law establishing appellate courts, enlarging the circuits, and providing for



the election of three judges for each circuit. Judge Phillips is still one of the three judges of this circuit and has recently been nominated for a position on the Supreme Bench of the state.

At the time of the organization of the county, legal talent was less in quantity, and perhaps I may justly say, greater in quality than at the present time. Members of many different bars found it profitable to practice here. Indeed in those days the amount of litigation in each county was so small that lawyers found it necessary to follow the judge from one court to another through the entire circuit. The history of the first courts of the shows a formidable array of names many of which have long since been inscribed upon the nation's roll of honor.

The most prominent of the attorneys who practiced here was that man who, rising from abject poverty and ignorance, became the greatest intellectual genius of his age and the emancipator of a bonded race - Abraham Lincoln. Mr Lincoln is well remembered by the older citizens especially those living in the northern part of the county, many of whom knew him as the "Sangamon county rail-splitter". Lincoln's distinguished rival, Stephen A Douglass who at this time was just entering upon his brilliant career, also practiced at this bar. Here, too, was E. H. Baker who was styled "the silver-tongued orator". He commanded an Illinois regiment in the Mexican war, was afterward United States senator from Oregon, and lost his life at the head of his command at the



battle of Ball's Bluff in the early part of the civil war. One of the brightest legal intellects of that time was Stephen T. Logan, who yet resides in Springfield. He was styled "the walking encyclopedia of legal information". The name of Anthony Thornton of Shelbyville also belongs in this list. Judge Thornton for a time graced the bench of the Supreme Court of Illinois. He is still a practitioner of this bar and is considered one of the ablest lawyers in the state. Senator McClung of national reputation was a member of this bar. Also in this connection may be mentioned the names of Richard J. Oglesby and John M. Palmer. Both came here and assisted in fighting the legal battles of the county. Both are renowned in the state and nation as gallant soldiers, as governors of a great state, and as

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United States senators from Illinois.

Besides the foregoing prominent names, there were many other men of legal ability who attained success in those early courts. It is true, the lawyers residing in the county were few in number. However, as the population has increased the number has grown larger until now the bar of the county embraces a very great number of ambitious studious young men with bright promising futures, as well as men of maturer years, who have, by patience and diligent toil, won high honors in the honorable profession of law. The members of the present bar is too large to treat in detail. Suffice it to say that the bar of Christian county will compare favorably in point of talent with any in central Illinois.



## Chapter IX. Educational Progress.

The attention given to education and the founding of schools, by the early settlers, was necessarily very limited. Notwithstanding, the cause of education has steadily but surely advanced. A brief review of the development of education in this country, may not be out of place here.

The idea of making knowledge common, extends farther back than the existence of Illinois as a separate territory. Indeed, the celebrated ordinance of 1787 declared education to be "necessary to the good government of mankind" and added that "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged". A portion of this encourage-

ment came in a material form in 1818, Congress, during the early part of that year, appropriated three per cent of the net proceeds of public lands within the limits of Illinois, for the encouragement of learning, one-sixth of which was to be bestowed upon a college or university. The proceeds of this three per cent fund was loaned to the state in 1835 and the interest accruing therefrom was annually distributed for school purposes.

However, the most valuable donation from Congress, for school purposes, was the sixteenth section of every township. This grant in the state of Illinois amounted to 998449 acres. Had this been properly managed, it would, no doubt, have released the people from local taxation for educational purposes for all time. But the legislature ordered much of this to be disposed of at a time when



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land was very cheap, The returns from this magnificent gift soon became insufficient and Taxes had to be added, The legislature having been advised that provisions should be made for the support of common schools, passed an act establishing the first free school system in 1825. The act provided that annually two dollars out of every one hundred should be appropriated for the use of schools. This met with violent opposition which finally became so great that the act was annulled in February 1827. Great as was this blow, it could not impede the progress of the common schools. The system of education slowly advanced until 1855 when the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction was created. The same year, through the efforts of Superintendent Edwards, a second free-school system was inaugurated. This system is sub-

stantially the state system of the present time. Since its adoption the schools of the country have flourished and improved greatly.

The schools of Christian county have nobly performed their part toward the general advancement of education in the state. Laboring for many years under very great disadvantages, without properly organized districts, with inferior school buildings the early settlers of the county struggled manfully to educate their children with the limited means afforded them. The first school-houses were log buildings of the rudest kind and poorly furnished. The first one built in the county was two miles east of Taylorville, in which school was first held during the winter of 1826-27. Owing to the small number of schools, in those days, children were sometimes obliged to go great



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distances in order to obtain instruction. The salaries of the teachers ranged from ten to fifteen dollars per month.

From such beginnings the schools of the county have grown to their present fair proportions. The number of schools is now nearly two hundred. This increase in number of schools has also been equaled by the improvement in the quality and convenience of the present buildings. The methods of teaching and the qualifications of teachers have kept fairly abreast with the other improvements. Three cities in the county are, at the present time, supporting excellent high schools. They are; Pana, Taylorville and Edinburg. These schools are still quite young but are in a flourishing condition, they having enrolled a total of 271 students last year.

## Chapter X.

### Conclusion.

In this brief record of what promises to become one of the foremost counties of Illinois, there are some things indicative of unprogressiveness. And on the other hand, there is much that should awaken a just pride. On all the stirring questions of the age it has occupied advanced ground in the van of progress. Its people zealously advocated every cause tending toward the advancement of the public welfare. Knowing that good society is the outgrowth of a sound morality as taught in the church, they established churches and have liberally maintained them. Conscious that the sum of human happiness is increased by culture they early founded schools



and have generously supported them. Believing that prosperity is the reward of enterprise, they have evinced a stirring activity in the pursuits of the various industries. Feeling that a manly independence is what makes the free man, they have carved out their own destiny. The history of the county and of its people is not yet made; the years that have passed since its organization have been spent in laying the foundation upon which history is hereafter to be constructed.

The End.